

EDWARD J. MARKEY

7TH DISTRICT, MASSACHUSETTS

ENERGY AND COMMERCE COMMITTEE

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TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND  
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# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-2107

May 9, 2003

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The Honorable George W. Bush  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I am writing to express my concern regarding recent press reports indicating substantial looting at Iraqi nuclear sites. The *Washington Post* reported on May 4 that a total of seven known nuclear sites had been inspected to date and all had been heavily looted. This report was verified on May 7 when CNN reported that a nuclear site had been looted, uranium "yellow cake" had been stolen, and local residents were using emptied uranium barrels to store water.

Last fall, I supported the resolution that authorized the use of force in Iraq because of my concern for the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons. Your case for the war also appeared to turn, critically, on that question. Therefore, I am puzzled by U.S. inattention to securing known sources of dirty bomb material and nuclear technology.

It appears grossly negligent for the U.S. to not have immediately secured known Iraqi nuclear sites. You said, in your March 17 address to the nation, "The danger is clear: using ... nuclear weapons, obtained with the help of Iraq, the terrorists could fulfill their stated ambitions and kill thousands or hundreds of thousands of innocent people in our country, or any other." Unfortunately, by not securing these sites immediately, we may have lost both control of and information about Iraq's nuclear weapons program, one of principle justifications for launching military actions against Iraq. But more importantly, we now are faced with the possibility that members of Al Qaeda or other terrorist groups seeking to harm the U.S. may have reached these nuclear materials first. We do not know exactly what was looted, by whom, or where any missing nuclear materials or technologies are today. This poses many problems, including potential risks to the health and safety of coalition troops and Iraqi civilians, and the possible spread of nuclear materials to terrorists.

Accordingly, I respectfully request your assistance in providing prompt responses to the following questions:

1. Is it true that there was a one-month delay in securing these sites identified by the International Atomic Energy Agency, especially since they were already known to contain at least some materials and documentation that may be relevant to establishing the nature and extent of Iraq's nuclear program? If so, why was this allowed to occur?
2. What steps are being taken to secure these sites now to prevent additional looting, to identify what was taken, and to prevent any looting at other such dangerous sites?

3. What steps are being taken to facilitate the return or recovery these dangerous materials and to protect the health of coalition troops and Iraqi civilians?
4. What steps are being taken to prevent the smuggling of these materials out of Iraq?

Thank you for your assistance and cooperation in providing prompt responses to these questions. I would appreciate your response to these questions by June 1, 2003. Please have your staff contact Dr. Benn Tannenbaum or Mr. Jeffrey Duncan of my staff at (202) 225-2836 if you have any questions about this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Edward J. Markey". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each name being capitalized and prominent.

Edward J. Markey  
Member of Congress